

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Office of Planning & Research.

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Pacheco State Park General Plan.

Lead Agency: California Department of Parks and Recreation
Four Rivers District
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The California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), as the Lead Agency, will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project described below. We would like to know the views of interested persons, organizations, and agencies as to the scope and content of the information to be included and analyzed in the EIR. Agencies should comment on the elements of the environmental information that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The project description, location, and potential environmental effects of the proposed project (to the extent known) are contained in this Notice of Preparation (NOP).

*California Department of Parks and Recreation
Pacheco State Park Notice of Preparation
4/16/03*

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response should be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than January 3, 2003

Please send your written response or comments to Dennis Imhoff, CEQA Coordinator, California Department of Parks and Recreation, at the address shown above. Responses should include the name of a contact person at your agency.

Project Title: Pacheco State Park General Plan.

Project Location: Entrance off Dinosaur Point Road, south of State Route 152, approximately 24 miles west of the City of Los Banos and 20 miles east of Gilroy in the counties of Merced and Santa Clara. (See attached project location map)

Project/Site Description:

DPR's General Plan Unit, in conjunction with its Four Rivers District office, is in the process of developing a General Plan for Pacheco State Park in accordance with Public Resources Code §5002.2 referencing General Plan guidelines and §21000 et seq. concerning the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the General Plan is to guide future development activities and management objectives at the Park.

Pacheco State Park is a recent addition to the State Park system, opened to the public in 1997 and has not had a General Plan prepared to date. The 6,890 acre Park, donated by the late Paula Fatjo, a descendant of Francisco Pacheco for the "protection, maintenance, and fostering of the natural flora and fauna." Of the total acreage, 2,600 acres are currently open to the public for hiking, mountain biking and equestrian recreation. The Park is characterized by old ranch roads meandering through plant communities of valley oak, blue oak, grassland and chamise / chaparral.

The land around Pacheco was originally part of El Rancho San Luis Gonzaga, a 48,000-acre Mexican land grant deeded to Juan Perez Pacheco in 1843. The Pacheco family built an adobe home (circa 1846) in a canyon that now lies beneath San Luis Reservoir adjacent to Pacheco State Park on the east. The Park contains several residences, garages, paddocks, and outbuildings. The

primary residence is a mixture of varied wood frame construction styles and includes a prefabricated building. Portions of the property are leased for wind turbines and grazing.

Preparation of the General Plan is in its early stages, including a current evaluation of existing resource and management opportunities and constraints at the Park that will aid in the development of the General Plan. Known resources at the Park include:

- Native plant communities and habitat for rare species;
- Wildlife habitats, including listed species such as the California red-legged frog;
- Open space/scenic vistas;
- Historical/cultural resources;
- Recreational resources including hiking and equestrian trails.

Issues that will be considered as part of the General Plan process include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Public safety and vehicular access issues on State Route 152;
- Implications of potential alignments for high-speed rail facilities;
- Relationship to adjacent San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area and providing a possible linking trail system;
- Opportunities for overnight camping, horseback riding, and other expanded day use and recreational activities;
- Facilities analysis, including use of existing buildings;
- Evaluation of historical/cultural resources;
- Evaluation of natural resources, including potential impacts to state and federally listed species;
- Regional growth and planning issues in the surrounding areas;
- Interpretive and concession opportunities.

Potential Environmental Effects:

Although ultimate land use and resources management provisions of the General Plan have not yet been determined, generally expected types of environmental impacts that may occur as a result of

the General Plan can be identified. Based on the resource characteristics of the Park and generally anticipated Park uses, potential environmental effects that will likely be addressed in the EIR, include:

- Threatened and endangered species habitat effects;
- Potential impacts to native plant communities and plant / wildlife habitats;
- Potential impacts to wetlands and seasonal ponds;
- Traffic safety for ingress and egress at State Route 152;
- Historic building and other cultural resource effects;
- Scenic effects related to expanding wind turbine leases on site;
- Land use effects related to local and regional development, including a high-speed rail system.

While take of threatened and endangered species is not anticipated, the EIR will describe future State and Federal consultation and permit requirements that may be required for facility development as necessary.

Intended Use of the EIR:

DPR and the Parks and Recreation Commission will use the EIR component of the General Plan to consider the environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives, when reviewing the proposed General Plan for approval. The EIR will serve as the State's CEQA compliance document for adoption of the General Plan. It will also serve as the programmatic environmental document that may be referenced in implementing future actions included in the General Plan. Responsible agencies may also use the EIR as needed for subsequent discretionary actions.

Scoping Meeting:

Saturday, January 11, 2003
10:00 am. – 2:00 pm
Four Rivers District Office
31426 Gonzaga Road

Gustine, CA, 95322

State Parks CEQA Coordinator, Four Rivers District

Date

Attachments: NOP Distribution List; Project Location Map